

Maine Revised Statutes
Title 29-A: MOTOR VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC
Chapter 19: OPERATION

§2054. EMERGENCY AND AUXILIARY LIGHTS; SIRENS; PRIVILEGES

1. Definitions. As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Ambulance" means any vehicle designed, constructed and routinely used or intended to be used for the transportation of ill or injured persons and licensed by Maine Emergency Medical Services pursuant to Title 32, chapter 2-B. [1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF) .]

B. "Authorized emergency vehicle" means any one of the following vehicles:

- (1) An ambulance;
- (2) A Baxter State Park Authority vehicle operated by a Baxter State Park ranger;
- (3) A Bureau of Marine Patrol vehicle operated by a coastal warden;
- (4) A Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry vehicle operated by a forest ranger;
- (5) A Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry vehicle used for forest fire control;
- (6) A Department of Corrections vehicle used for responding to the escape of or performing the high-security transfer of a prisoner, juvenile client or juvenile detainee;
- (7) A Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife vehicle operated by a warden;
- (8) A Department of Public Safety vehicle operated by a police officer appointed pursuant to Title 25, section 2908, a state fire investigator or a Maine Drug Enforcement Agency officer;
- (9) An emergency medical service vehicle;
- (10) A fire department vehicle;
- (11) A hazardous material response vehicle, including a vehicle designed to respond to a weapon of mass destruction;
- (12) A railroad police vehicle;
- (13) A sheriff's department vehicle;
- (14) A State Police or municipal police department vehicle;
- (15) A vehicle operated by a chief of police, a sheriff or a deputy sheriff when authorized by the sheriff;
- (16) A vehicle operated by a municipal fire inspector, a municipal fire chief, an assistant or deputy chief or a town forest fire warden;
- (17) A vehicle operated by a qualified deputy sheriff or other qualified individual to perform court security-related functions and services as authorized by the State Court Administrator pursuant to Title 4, section 17, subsection 15;
- (18) A Federal Government vehicle operated by a federal law enforcement officer;
- (19) A vehicle operated by a municipal rescue chief, deputy chief or assistant chief;
- (20) An Office of the Attorney General vehicle operated by a detective appointed pursuant to Title 5, section 202;
- (21) A Department of the Secretary of State vehicle operated by a motor vehicle investigator; and

(22) A University of Maine System vehicle operated by a University of Maine System police officer. [2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §5 (REV); 2011, c. 691, Pt. A, §30 (RPR).]

C. "Auxiliary light" means a light, other than standard equipment lighting such as headlights, taillights, directional signals, brake lights, clearance lights, parking lights and license plate lights, that is displayed on a vehicle and used to increase the operator's visibility of the road or the visibility of the vehicle to other operators and pedestrians. [1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

D. "Emergency light" means an auxiliary light displayed and used on an authorized emergency vehicle to distinguish it and make it recognizable as an authorized emergency vehicle. [1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

E. "Emergency medical service vehicle" means a vehicle equipped and used to transport emergency medical personnel or equipment to ill or injured persons and authorized by Maine Emergency Medical Services. [1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

E-1. "Fire department vehicle" means a vehicle owned by, registered to and maintained by a governmental agency or political subdivision that is equipped and used primarily for response to a fire or emergency situation. [2007, c. 348, §19 (NEW).]

F. "Fire vehicle" means any vehicle listed under paragraph B, subparagraph (5) or (16). [1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

G. "Hazardous material response vehicle" means a vehicle equipped for and used in response to reports of emergencies resulting from actual or potential releases, spills or leaks of, or other exposure to, hazardous substances that is authorized by a mutual aid agreement pursuant to Title 37-B, section 795, subsection 3 and approved by the local emergency planning committee or committees whose jurisdiction includes the area in which the vehicle operates. [1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

H. "Highway maintenance vehicle" means a vehicle used to maintain the highways, including, but not limited to, a plow, grader, sand truck, sweeper and tar truck. [1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

I. "Police vehicle" means any vehicle listed under paragraph B, subparagraph (2), (3), (4), (7), (8), (12), (13), (14) or (18). [1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

I-1. "Public service vehicle" means a vehicle used to assist members of the public or law enforcement officers with disabled vehicles or to remove debris from a roadway, or a vehicle used to construct, maintain, inspect or repair utility infrastructure, including, but not limited to, electricity, water, sewer, cable, telephone, gas and natural gas infrastructure. "Public service vehicle" includes a wrecker. [2015, c. 32, §1 (NEW).]

J. "Rescue vehicle" means any vehicle listed under paragraph B, subparagraph (19). [2005, c. 14, §2 (NEW).]

[2015, c. 32, §1 (AMD) .]

2. Authorized lights. Authorized lights are governed as follows.

A. Only an ambulance; an emergency medical service vehicle; a fire department vehicle; a police vehicle; a Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry vehicle used for forest fire control; a Department of Corrections vehicle as described in subsection 1, paragraph B, subparagraph (6); and a highway maintenance vehicle may be equipped with a device that provides for alternate flashing of the vehicle's headlights. [1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF); 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §5 (REV).]

B. Only a police vehicle may be equipped with a device that provides for alternate flashing of the vehicle's brake or rear directional lights and back-up lights or strobe lights behind the rear brake lenses. [1995, c. 247, §4 (AMD).]

C. The use of amber lights on vehicles is governed by the following.

(1) A vehicle engaged in highway maintenance or in emergency rescue operations by emergency management and public safety agencies and a public service vehicle may be equipped with auxiliary lights that emit an amber light.

(1-A) A Department of Labor motor vehicle operated by a workplace safety inspector may be equipped with auxiliary lights that emit an amber light.

(2) A wrecker must be equipped with a flashing light mounted on top of the vehicle in such a manner as to emit an amber light over a 360-degree angle. The light must be in use on a public way or a place where public traffic may reasonably be anticipated when servicing, freeing, loading, unloading or towing a vehicle.

(3) A vehicle engaged in snow removal or sanding operations on a public way must be equipped with and display an auxiliary light that provides visible light coverage over a 360-degree range. The light must emit an amber beam of light and be equipped with a blinking or strobe light function and have sufficient intensity to be visible at 500 feet in normal daylight. When the left wing of a plow is in operation and extends over the center of the road, an auxiliary light must show the extreme end of the left wing. That light may be attached to the vehicle so that the beam of light points at the left wing. The light illuminating the left wing may be controlled by a separate switch or by the regular lighting system and must be in operation at all times when the vehicle is used for plowing snow on public ways.

(4) A vehicle equipped and used for plowing snow on other than public ways may be equipped with an auxiliary rotary flashing light that must be mounted on top of the vehicle in such a manner as to emit an amber beam of light over a 360-degree angle, or an amber strobe, or combination of strobes, that emits at a minimum a beam of 50 candlepower and provides visible light coverage over a 360-degree range. The light may be in use on a public way only when the vehicle is entering the public way in the course of plowing private driveways and other off-highway locations.

(5) A rural mail vehicle may be equipped with auxiliary lights.

(a) The lights used to the front must be white or amber, or any shade between white and amber.

(b) The lights used to the rear must be amber or red, or any shade between amber and red.

(c) The lights, whether used to the front or rear, must be mounted at the same level and as widely spaced laterally as possible.

(d) The lights, whether used to the front or rear, must flash simultaneously.

(e) The lights must be visible from a distance of at least 500 feet in normal daylight.

(6) A vehicle used or provided by a contract security company to assist in traffic control and direction at construction or maintenance sites on a public way may be equipped with amber auxiliary lights.

(7) A Department of Public Safety vehicle operated by a motor carrier inspector or motor vehicle inspector may be equipped with auxiliary lights that emit an amber light.

(8) A vehicle used by an animal control officer appointed pursuant to Title 7, section 3947 may be equipped with auxiliary lights that emit a flashing amber light.

(9) A refuse, garbage or trash business vehicle used by an individual to transport refuse, garbage and trash may be equipped with auxiliary lights that emit a flashing amber light.

(10) A vehicle used by an individual to transport and deliver newspapers may be equipped with auxiliary lights that emit a flashing amber light. [2015, c. 31, §1 (AMD); 2015, c. 32, §2 (AMD).]

D. Except as provided in this paragraph, a vehicle may not be equipped with or display a blue light.

(1) Emergency lights used on the following vehicles must emit a blue light or a combination of blue and white light: a police vehicle; a Department of Corrections vehicle as described in subsection 1, paragraph B, subparagraph (6); a vehicle operated by a chief of police, a sheriff or a deputy sheriff; and a vehicle operated by a qualified deputy sheriff or other qualified individual performing court security-related functions and services.

(2) Emergency lights used on an ambulance, an emergency medical service vehicle, a fire department vehicle or a hazardous material response vehicle may include one blue light mounted facing toward the rear of the vehicle so that the light is primarily visible to approaching traffic from the rear only.

(3) The taillight of a vehicle, or replica of a vehicle, manufactured prior to 1952 and registered under section 457, may contain a blue or purple insert of not more than one inch in diameter.

(4) Blue interior auxiliary lighting or dash lighting may be used on any vehicle if no portion of the beam of light is visible at a height of 42 inches above a surface parallel with the level surface on which the vehicle stands at a distance of 20 feet from any part of the vehicle. [2005, c. 183, §2 (AMD).]

E. [2003, c. 340, §7 (RP).]

F. Only vehicles listed in this paragraph, rural mail vehicles as provided in paragraph C, subparagraph (5) and school buses may be equipped with, display or use a red auxiliary or emergency light.

(1) Emergency lights used on an ambulance, an emergency medical service vehicle, a fire department vehicle, a fire vehicle, a rescue vehicle or a hazardous material response vehicle must emit a red light or a combination of red and white light.

(2) The municipal officers or a municipal official designated by the municipal officers, with the approval of the fire chief, may authorize an active member of a municipal or volunteer fire department to use one red or combination red and white flashing auxiliary light mounted in the windshield or on the dashboard at the front of the vehicle or 2 flashing red or combination red and white auxiliary lights mounted on the front of the vehicle above the front bumper and below the hood and one red auxiliary light mounted in the rear window area. The light or lights may be displayed but may be used only while the member is en route to or at the scene of a fire or other emergency. A light mounted on the dashboard or in the windshield must be shielded so that the emitted light does not interfere with the operator's vision. The use of lights may be revoked at any time by the fire chief.

(3) Members of an emergency medical service licensed by Maine Emergency Medical Services may display and use on a vehicle red or combination red and white flashing auxiliary lights and red auxiliary lights of the same proportion, in the same location and under the same conditions as those permitted municipal and volunteer firefighters, when authorized by the chief official of the emergency medical service. The use of lights may be revoked at any time by the chief official of the emergency medical service. [2015, c. 31, §2 (AMD).]

G. A vehicle may be equipped with a spotlight. Only spotlights on authorized emergency vehicles, highway maintenance vehicles and public service vehicles may be used on a public way, except any vehicle may use a spotlight in cases of necessity when other lights required by law fail to operate. [2015, c. 32, §3 (AMD).]

H. A vehicle in a funeral procession may be equipped with a flashing light. The light must emit a yellow beam of light. The light may not be more than 5 inches in diameter and must be placed on the dashboard. The light must be shielded so that the emitted light does not interfere with the operator's vision. The

flashing light may be used only when the vehicle is used in a funeral procession. In addition, a vehicle operated by a licensed funeral home and used as a lead vehicle in a funeral procession may use a device that provides for a white flashing strobe light in the front grille. [2007, c. 62, §1 (AMD).]

[2015, c. 31, §§1, 2 (AMD); 2015, c. 32, §§2, 3 (AMD).]

3. Sirens. A bell or siren may not be installed or used on any vehicle, except an authorized emergency vehicle.

[1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

4. Right-of-way. An authorized emergency vehicle operated in response to, but not returning from, a call or fire alarm or operated in pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law has the right-of-way when emitting a visual signal using an emergency light and an audible signal using a bell or siren. On the approach of any such vehicle, the operator of every other vehicle shall immediately draw that vehicle as near as practicable to the right-hand curb, parallel to the curb and clear of any intersection and bring it to a standstill until the authorized emergency vehicle has passed. A violation of this subsection is a Class E crime that, notwithstanding Title 17-A, section 1301, is punishable by a minimum fine of \$250 for the first offense and for a 2nd offense occurring within 3 years of the first offense a mandatory 30-day suspension of a driver's license.

[1997, c. 162, §1 (AMD).]

4-A. Registered owner's liability for vehicle failing to yield right-of-way. A person who is a registered owner of a vehicle at the time that vehicle is involved in a violation of subsection 4 commits a traffic infraction unless a defense applies pursuant to paragraph D. For purposes of this subsection, "registered owner" includes a person issued a dealer or transporter registration plate.

A. The operator of an authorized emergency vehicle who observes a violation of subsection 4 may report the violation to a law enforcement officer. If a report is made, the operator shall report the time and the location of the violation and the registration plate number and a description of the vehicle involved. The officer shall initiate an investigation of the reported violation and, if possible, contact the registered owner of the motor vehicle involved and request that the registered owner supply information identifying the operator of the registered owner's motor vehicle. [1997, c. 162, §2 (NEW).]

B. The investigating officer may cause the registered owner of the vehicle to be served with a summons for a violation of this subsection. [1997, c. 162, §2 (NEW).]

C. Except as provided in paragraph D, it is not a defense to a violation of this subsection that a registered owner was not operating the vehicle at the time of the violation. [1997, c. 162, §2 (NEW).]

D. The following are defenses to a violation of this subsection.

(1) If a person other than the registered owner is operating the vehicle at the time of the violation of subsection 4 and is convicted of that violation, the registered owner may not be found in violation of this subsection.

(2) If the registered owner is a lessor of vehicles and at the time of the violation the vehicle was in the possession of a lessee and the lessor provides the investigating officer with a copy of the lease agreement containing the information required by section 254, the lessee, not the lessor, may be charged under this subsection.

(3) If the vehicle is operated using a dealer or transporter registration plate and at the time of the violation the vehicle was operated by any person other than the dealer or transporter and if the dealer or transporter provides the investigating officer with the name and address of the person who had control over the vehicle at the time of the violation, that person, not the dealer or transporter, may be charged under this subsection.

(4) If a report that the vehicle was stolen is given to a law enforcement officer or agency before the violation occurs or within a reasonable time after the violation occurs and an investigation determines the vehicle was stolen, the registered owner may not be charged under this subsection. [1997, c. 162, §2 (NEW).]

[1997, c. 162, §2 (NEW) .]

5. Exercise of privileges. The operator of an authorized emergency vehicle when responding to, but not upon returning from, an emergency call or fire alarm or when in pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law may exercise the privileges set forth in this subsection. The operator of an authorized emergency vehicle may:

A. Park or stand, notwithstanding the provisions of this chapter; [1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

B. Proceed past a red signal, stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as necessary for safe operation; [1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

C. Exceed the maximum speed limits as long as life or property is not endangered, except that capital security officers and employees of the Department of Corrections may not exercise this privilege; [2001, c. 360, §7 (AMD).]

D. Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions; and [1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

E. Proceed with caution past a stopped school bus that has red lights flashing only:

(1) After coming to a complete stop; and

(2) When signaled by the school bus operator to proceed. [1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

Nothing in this subsection prohibits the operator of an authorized emergency vehicle from activating emergency lights for the limited purpose of warning motorists when entering or exiting structures designed to house the emergency vehicles.

[2003, c. 633, §5 (AMD) .]

6. Emergency lights and audible signals. The operator of an authorized emergency vehicle who is exercising the privileges granted under subsection 5 shall use an emergency light authorized by subsection 2. The operator of an authorized emergency vehicle who is exercising the privileges granted under subsection 5, paragraphs B, C, D and E shall sound a bell or siren when reasonably necessary to warn pedestrians and other operators of the emergency vehicle's approach.

[1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF) .]

7. Duty to drive with due regard for safety. Subsections 4, 5 and 6 do not relieve the operator of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons, nor do those subsections protect the operator from the consequences of the operator's reckless disregard for the safety of others.

[1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF) .]

8. Standards for lights on highway maintenance vehicles. The Commissioner of Transportation, with the consent of the Chief of the State Police, shall adopt standards and specifications for headlights, clearance lights, identification lights and other lights on highway maintenance vehicles. These standards must include prescribed usage for the various lights when a highway maintenance vehicle is in operation. The standards and specifications adopted pursuant to this section must correspond to and so far as practical conform with

those approved by the national association of state highway officials. The standards and specifications adopted pursuant to this section are in addition to and do not supersede the lighting requirements established in subsections 1 to 7 and sections 1904 to 1909.

Highway maintenance vehicles owned by a municipality or performing maintenance under contract to a municipality must meet the lighting requirements established in subsections 1 to 7 and sections 1904 to 1909. A municipality may adopt the standards and specifications developed in accordance with this subsection.

[1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF) .]

9. Stationary vehicles. The operator of a vehicle passing a stationary authorized emergency vehicle using an emergency light or a stationary public service vehicle using its authorized lights, with due regard to the safety and traffic conditions, shall:

A. Pass in a lane not adjacent to that of the authorized emergency vehicle or public service vehicle, if possible; or [2015, c. 32, §4 (AMD) .]

B. If passing in a nonadjacent lane is impossible or unsafe, pass the emergency vehicle or public service vehicle at a careful and prudent speed reasonable for passing the authorized emergency vehicle or public service vehicle safely. [2015, c. 32, §4 (AMD) .]

A violation of this subsection is a traffic infraction for which a minimum fine of \$250 must be adjudged.

[2015, c. 32, §4 (AMD) .]

SECTION HISTORY

1993, c. 683, §A2 (NEW). 1993, c. 683, §B5 (AFF). 1995, c. 22, §1 (AMD). 1995, c. 65, §C6 (AMD). 1995, c. 65, §§A153,C15 (AFF). 1995, c. 247, §4 (AMD). 1997, c. 162, §§1,2 (AMD). 1999, c. 29, §2 (AMD). 2001, c. 10, §1 (AMD). 2001, c. 360, §§5-8 (AMD). 2003, c. 78, §§1,2 (AMD). 2003, c. 97, §1 (AMD). 2003, c. 209, §1 (AMD). 2003, c. 340, §7 (AMD). 2003, c. 451, §T14 (AMD). 2003, c. 510, §§C8,9 (AMD). 2003, c. 633, §§4,5 (AMD). 2005, c. 14, §§1-3 (AMD). 2005, c. 15, §1 (AMD). 2005, c. 183, §2 (AMD). 2005, c. 299, §1 (AMD). 2005, c. 314, §12 (AMD). 2005, c. 482, §4 (AMD). 2007, c. 11, §1 (AMD). 2007, c. 62, §1 (AMD). 2007, c. 348, §§18-20 (AMD). 2009, c. 251, §10 (AMD). 2009, c. 317, Pt. F, §1 (AMD). 2009, c. 421, §4 (AMD). 2011, c. 448, §2 (AMD). 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §5 (REV). 2011, c. 691, Pt. A, §30 (AMD). 2013, c. 462, §4 (AMD). 2015, c. 31, §§1, 2 (AMD). 2015, c. 32, §§1-4 (AMD).

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